

What is a Research Coach?

Description

A research coach is a **paid student position** available to both graduate and senior undergraduate students. Research coaches help instructors implement FYRE (First Year Research Experience) by providing guidance to students as they explore the Research Cycle (question~investigate~share).

Benefits

- Senior students gain valuable mentoring experience.
- Senior students develop additional research and teaching capabilities for either graduate studies or professional development.
- Research coaches help provide personalized support to entry-level students as they develop research skills, perhaps for the first time.

Research Coach Responsibilities

- **Work** with an instructor in a FYRE class. Each FYRE class is unique; a research coach in one course may have different tasks compared to another research coach.
- **Collaborate** with the instructor and the students through the three aspects of the Research Cycle: asking a researchable question; investigating the question; sharing the results.
- **Guide and support** students regarding research processes, with feedback and formative assessment.
- **May** dedicate up to 10% of allotted time to providing summative feedback (marking and grading) to students regarding research projects, as per instructor request.
- **Direct** students to additional university or other resources as required.
- **Facilitate sharing** by students to communicate results.
- **Receive** training, some on-going support, and an hourly stipend for set hours of work per three-credit course; log timesheets in PAWS.
- **Hold** this position (if required) in addition to a TA or lab assistant position.

Get Involved

Students—did you take a class where you think a research project might be a great fit for student learning? Approach the instructor and make that suggestion! (And maybe a job!)

Faculty—do you have a potential candidate in mind as a research coach? Make a recommendation for your FYRE class.

For more information please contact Merle Massie at merle.massie@usask.ca

<https://vpresearch.usask.ca/students/undergraduate/undergraduate-research.php>

Merle Massie merle.massie@usask.ca (306) 966-7127

Research coach best practices (for faculty)

■ *Training*

Research coaches are offered a two to three hour introductory training session. The session considers institutional undergraduate research activities and goals, on-campus resources, expectations for professional conduct, and skills in group facilitation. Further training and classroom/course direction will come from faculty, dependent on course FYRE curriculum needs.

■ *Communication*

FYRE faculty should:

- **Meet with research coach(es)** as a team prior to the first class and often throughout the term (they are your eyes and ears as the course progresses)
- **State** expectations, projected hours, distribution of work; & identify a lead person
- **Share** course syllabus and FYRE plan (Grant access to Blackboard to the research coach)
- **Divide** roles according to expertise:
 - E.g. building questionnaires, improving students' writing skills, knowledge of formatting and style protocols, designing posters, mitigating group problems
- **Explain** how and when research coaches should contact you & students; give examples:
 - E.g. carbon copy (Cc) research coaches on your emails to students' questions so they can field similar questions in your preferred way
- **Work** with research coaches to facilitate the share aspect of FYRE (poster session organization and logistics, website know how, other)
- **Invite** input about the overall research experience and toward planned activities in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)
- **Debrief** after class is finished to identify successes and problems for future review

■ *Responsibilities*

Research coaches can assist FYRE projects by leading/assisting in classes and labs, and through just-in-time and on-call help for students. Research coaches facilitate student success by:

- Extending the in-class presence (answering questions and checking on groups)
- Explaining processes for optimal research-skills development (formulating researchable questions, using methodology and terminology, collecting and interpreting data, providing constructive peer-review, and disseminating/presenting findings)
- Setting on-campus office hours using bookable study rooms or Library Pod2
- Providing timely and usable feedback and suggestions to students
- Facilitating cohesive group-work and mitigating problems
- Making referrals to campus resources for research skill development and student wellness

Research coach best practices (for coaches)

Professional Development

Being a research coach is similar to being a TA or lab instructor, but emphasizes a slightly different skillset. You will develop professional practices in student engagement, communication, group facilitation, teaching, providing feedback and coaching research projects. It is a professional position, critical for FYRE success.

Communication

- Meet regularly with course faculty (before, during, and after the course)
 - Let them know ASAP of any class problems or concerns
 - Ask for support or clarification as needed
- Understand the FYRE project
 - outcomes and expectations, timelines and time commitment, resources needed, types of teaching/mentorship required of you, other responsibilities (photocopying, direct instruction, powerpoint/presentations, meetings or special logistics)
- Develop strong student rapport and trust, as early as possible
- Set student communication guidelines that work for you. Options include:
 - Social media groups or hashtags; email guidelines and commitments; texting (if you choose to use)
 - Set office hours/book study rooms. POD2 in the Murray Library is set aside for Research Coaches working with FYRE. Call Erin Holcomb at 966-8056 to book.

Research Skills

First year classes contain a mix of first-year students and upper year students taking electives. Some will come with well-developed skillsets and need little coaching; others will need more support.



- Work with the instructor to identify useful resources or in-class exercises to develop skills
- Identify library guides and tutorials, data management, writing resources, citation guides and rules, poster guides and resources, presentation guides
- Offer group charters, time management and roles/responsibilities guides, group communication guides, ground rules
- Understand the Research Cycle (question~investigate~share)

Boundaries

Research coaches maintain clear boundaries and expectations. Instead of providing answers, ask probing questions. Keep students (and faculty) on task, while staying within your time limitations. If you need help and support, ask for it. Set professional standards, and build a leadership skillset.